

NWCU JOURNAL

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Research on the Internet

By Kelly Spruiell

A month ago an uncle of mine got in touch with me via e-mail. I was surprised to learn that one of my family members was so technologically up-to-date. I had been under the impression that I was the only one in the family who was computer/internet literate. My uncle, of course, took offense to this and informed me that my 86 year old great aunt was also online.

The Internet has opened so many doors to information that now it's difficult to weed out the proper or best way of obtaining the information one wants. It can be a bit overwhelming at times. But have no fear. There are some successful ways to go about research on the Internet. Hopefully, this article will assist you in researching law on the Internet. It may help you lose your fear of the 'Big Bad Web' or simply assist you in finding new avenues to conduct legal research.

What is the Internet? How do I use it?

The Internet is a composition of computers networked together to share information. The computers that are linked to the 'net' host a multitude of different types of 'sites' such as World Wide Web sites, gopher sites, telnet sites, etc. Today, the World Wide Web dominates most of the Internet. When people refer to the Internet they commonly are referring to the World Wide Web (WWW).

For an individual to use the Internet one needs a personal computer with a modem, a phone line and an access account to the

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NWCU LOOKS AT THE MOVE TOWARDS 'CYBER' UNIVERSITIES.

By Dean of Academic Affairs – Robert Gonzalez

Christmas Break is over at schools across the country and it's time to go back to class, or is it? Internet and "Cyber Universities" have made the annual migration back to campus an option. No longer is it a necessity.

The possibility of on-line education for law students around the world has resulted in warm welcomes from students and a cloud of apprehension from officials in higher education. Many tenured faculty members question the role of traditional teachers in the new uncharted world of distance learning. The often most asked question seems to be "How can cyber students learn the human side of the law without the face-to-face interaction necessary in traditional college and university life?"

THE FUTURE

Distance education, now involved in the convenience and availability of the Internet, is a growing trend that is likely to become more prevalent in the future. It can reach far beyond the boundaries of traditional on-campus programs.

The concept of distance learning has been around for a long while. I recall being able to take college/university

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Quotes to live by

"Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times."

-Niccolo Machiavelli: Discorsi, ix,3,1531

*"Four things come not back:
The spoken word; the sped arrow;
Time past; the neglected opportunity."*

-Omar Ibn, 581-644, Sayings

Internet. To gain access to the Internet you must go through an Internet Service Provider (ISP) such as America Online. Many cities have local ISP's that may offer services tailored specifically to your requirements. Your ISP will provide you with software to browse the Internet. This software is called a 'Browser'. Common browsers are 'Netscape' and 'Microsoft Internet Explorer'.

Now that I'm on the 'Net' how do I locate legal information?

There are many ways of seeking information on the Internet. One of the most common way is to go about a 'key word search' through a 'search engine'. To do this you must go to a search engine web site such as www.yahoo.com and enter the subject you wish to search when prompted. Some search engines are tailored specifically for legal research. Such sites as FindLaw (www.lawcrawler.com) and ALL LAW (www.alllaw.com) will seek legal sites containing information on the subject you ask it to search for. Usually, it is best to be specific on the subject you are looking for. If you are not specific you may end up with unrelated Web sites. With the amount of information on the Internet you will almost always find sites that are directly related to your subject.

Another good way to find current legal information on the Internet is to get registered with a 'Listserve'. Listserves send you information via email on related topics. It's similar to a subscription to a magazine but most are free and send news to your email address daily. Listserves or mailing lists are a useful way of receiving information from someone quite knowledgeable on a specific subject. Listserves are a useful way to network with your peers. To find Listserves of interest to you, go to the web address www.findmail.com.

Many organizations and Universities have 'Newsgroups' that work as virtual bulletin boards. People with access to a newsgroup can post papers, questions, receive answers and download information. The best way to find a newsgroup of interest to you is to go to the Deja News web site. Deja News allows you to search for existing newsgroups and gives information on how to get access to such newsgroups. After getting to Deja News (www.dejanews.com) look under 'browse groups' and enter your subject, for example: +family +law.

Many Northwestern California University students have taken advantage of Lexis-Nexis services through our school's account. LEXIS-NEXIS is an online legal, news and business information library. LEXIS is a full text legal information service providing an estimated 300,000 searches a day, from approximately 4,800 sources. The LEXIS service contains major archives of federal and state case law, continuously updated statutes of all 50 states, state and federal regulations and an extensive collection of public records from major U.S. states and counties. The LEXIS service has 40 specialized libraries covering all major fields of practice, including tax, securities, banking, environmental, energy and international law. Convenient group files combine legal information from all jurisdictions and, where appropriate, add sources of relevant business, financial or general news. To access Lexis-Nexis through the school's account you need to sign a 1999 L-N student agreement and pay fees. Though it can be difficult learning to use Lexis-Nexis, we have had a lot of positive feedback from students who do research through Lexis-Nexis. An attorney once stated that it should be considered legal malpractice to not use a service such as Lexis-Nexis when researching cases. For assistance in using these services I strongly recommend purchasing the Lexis handbook we offer.

If you visit our school's web page at www.nwculaw.edu please check out our 'legal and research links' page.

Computers have changed the education industry drastically in recent years. Some folks are still leery about using computers and the Internet. Though the advances that are now offered to us can be confusing at times, everyone should at least attempt to jump into the 'age of the Internet'. It has many resources to offer. Without exploring those resources you may be doing yourself a disservice.

If you don't have a personal computer at home or work there are many libraries that have computers online for community members to use. In my small town, our library offers computer services and a librarian to help people get aquatinted with the Internet. Another recent development is that of Cyber cafes. Restaurants and coffee houses are setting up internet stations for their patrons and charge by the hour, so you can enjoy a cup of 'Joe' and research on the Internet at the same time. At NWCUCU we are in the process of setting up a Lexis-Nexis workstation for our Sacramento area students to use. I'll let you know more about this later.

If you have found an interesting way to research on the Internet or have any feedback to share please don't hesitate. You can contribute by writing 'Newsletter Editor' at NWCUCU or email Kelly@NWCULAW.EDU.



We would like to encourage any Student, Staff, Alumni or Faculty member to contribute to the NWCUCU JOURNAL. If you have an interesting story, published work, or advice for others please send it to: Newsletter Editor

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"Highly recommended"- Dean Clancey

courses in the early 90s on videotape, at extension centers, and even through cable television.

However, it is the Internet that has burgeoned in popularity over the last few years. It is responsible for making distance education more mainstream. The merger of the two is a natural progression for those who are seeking alternatives to the traditional method of higher education. On-line and "virtual" campuses are now making it possible for a greater number of people to continue their educational pursuits. This does not only include students who have a career, family, etc., but also those students who live in remote parts of the world. These people are fortunate now in that they can begin or continue an education that otherwise would not be possible.

WAIT A MINUTE

Critics argue that on-line degrees are not on par with those earned from a traditional campus type of study. Many have reservations about whether institutions are committed to providing the same level of quality in distance programs as with traditional programs. The key issue is whether an on-line/distance learning law degree is as beneficial as one obtained through the traditional route?

It is evident that there is no simple "yes" or "no" answer.

Opponents of on-line/distance learning education generally espouse arguments that such programs inherently limit the broader, more interactive aspects of a traditional education. Spontaneous debates, discussions and exchanges of ideas within a classroom, they say, are tantamount in developing a student's mind. Further, critics also claim laws and legal issues must be heard, interpreted, discussed, analyzed and synthesized with professors and other students in the same room.

Research conducted by the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) has concluded that the learning is similar. Effectiveness studies have been consistent in showing that when used in business, military training and adult learning, there is no significant difference in effectiveness between distance learning and traditional instruction. To my knowledge, effectiveness studies have not been conducted with respect to law schools, however, one can draw an inference that the findings would likely be similar.

WHY ALL THIS EFFORT DISCUSSING ON-LINE EDUCATION?

While all Northwestern California University School of Law (NWCUSL) students and graduates are aware of the existence of distance learning law schools, I have written this article to inform everyone that the School is planning to expand its services and offer more on-line support in the future. We are currently working towards offering students the ability to participate in online chat rooms, discussions with professors, and submitting assignments over the Internet.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you have any suggestions or opinions please let us know what you think. Maybe you have an experience that you would like to share with the school and other students. Our next Newsletter will focus more on On-line Legal Education, hopefully with some feedback and input from students and graduates.

Have a great year and good luck with your studies.

– Dean of Academic Affairs, Robert Gonzalez



FROM THE STATE BAR

NEW PRESIDENT TAKES OFFICE

In October of last year the State Bar of California swore in a new President. Ray Marshall, an attorney from San Francisco, took over the presidency in what has been called the most tumultuous time in State Bar History.

The recent instability of the California State Bar is said to be caused by a lack of funding that had of late nearly paralyzed most of its functions. Marshall remained optimistic that communication and collaboration with ingenuity would create the needed changes for the Bar.

Ray Marshall is not new to the Bar. He has served as one of its board members for the past four years and has chaired numerous committees. He graduated from the College of Idaho and received his law degree from Harvard. Marshall had been practicing law for twenty years before accepting the position of President of the State Bar.

"During this time of chaos and uncertainty we should take up the challenge posed by both our friends and critics to re-examine the mission, goals and objectives of the state bar." Marshall recently said.

We wish Mr. Marshall a good year as President and are eager to watch the new changes towards stabilizing the State Bar.

STATE BAR RECEIVES FUNDING TO REINSTATE VITAL FUNCTIONS

The Supreme Court of California approved the State Bar's request for emergency funding to reinstate its attorney discipline system. The approval was granted in the beginning of December, after a period of hiatus due to lack of funds.

The Court was in agreement that the Bar was in a 'State of Emergency' not being able to follow up on client complaints and disciplinary procedures.

After shutting down the State Bar Consumer Complaint Phonenumber, no complaints had been investigated. Between April and December of last year that added up to 2,097 uninvestigated complaints. Cases that had been under investigation were halted, and out of 800 matters filed and ready for litigation before the State Bar only 40 had proceeded to trial. In addition to the attorney discipline system being halted, since the 'shut down' family members of deceased attorneys have received no assistance from the State Bar in closing down the deceased's' practices.

Though not all are thrilled about the new Bar membership fees the Supreme Court authorized the Bar to collect, all can be glad to see things revitalized.

ALUMNI NEWS

Once again we would like to thank all Alumni who have sent in their personal stories to share with us. Please keep your letters coming in. We have received calls and letters expressing great appreciation for publishing them in our newsletter.



I began working for an attorney where I lived in Mount Shasta, California after graduating from Northwestern California University School of Law. Eventually I moved from Mount Shasta to Arcata, California and began a private practice. My practice was underway when my husband and I started our family.

Two weeks before the birth of my daughter, I concluded a land use case that involved the siting of a drug treatment center. When I discovered a large team of well-heeled attorneys from San Francisco on the other side, I was at first concerned. However, I soon found that I was well prepared by my education in law for the task at hand. The case was settled in my client's favor.

I enjoy being a Professor for NWCUC. Currently, I also frequently advise people on a pro bono basis, to inform them in matters pertaining to law, to explore legal options with them, and help them secure other counsel for matters involving litigation.

Since my daughter's birth I have been primarily raising her. I've been able to apply my education to my familial responsibilities. I care for my mother who has Alzheimer's disease and have learned some useful elder law. I have found my NWCUC education to be incredibly helpful in handling numerous issues that come up while I care for my mother, i.e.: fraudulent caregivers, mortgage/finance matters, being an effective trustee, competency matters, etc.

I'm sure I'll get back to actively practicing when I feel ready to throw myself into a demanding project that takes lots of my time and focus. When I resume my law career in earnest, I will want to work at a firm for a while, but my goal is really to be a successful sole practitioner in the environmental field.

I must say that even without practicing actively right now, it is amazingly useful to have an education in law, much more than I imagined.

Sincerely,
Margaret Draper
1992 NWCUC Graduate



- This Alumni letter was featured in our second newsletter. It is being reprinted due to its relevance to our articles on using the Internet for legal studies and practice.

I completed my course of study at Northwestern in April 1994. I took and passed the California State Bar examination in July 1994. I had not taken the trouble of completing and submitting the moral character documentation. As a result, I was not admitted to the bar until June 1995. Bit of advice: Submit this

moral character material toward the end of your last year of study.

I have been active in solo practice since November 1995. I [normally] have an office in San Luis Obispo, but live and work in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada for at least six months of each year since I remain on the faculty of the University of Alberta and must balance my duties at the University with law practice.

I devote about 12-15 hours a week to law. My practice is almost exclusively federal in focus, with about 80% dealing with immigration and the remainder to U.S. federal agencies, e.g., U.S. Customs, FDA and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission. I do some corporate, business and copyright law related to this federal practice. The majority of my clients are Canadian individuals or companies, with a smattering of clients from Asia and Africa. If I were to pigeonhole my practice it would be international/administrative law.

I am an advocate of identifying a legal niche and specializing [in it] since it is so hard to be a generalist and render competent service. Also, from a marketing standpoint a solo practitioner needs an identifying theme, which sets him or her apart from the thousands of other lawyers.

I plan to take early retirement from my university position in about four years, gradually increasing my practice so that I am investing about forty hours per week. My focus will continue in the area of administrative law, with more attention to federal agencies and less to immigration. I will be moving my office to San Francisco, and opening an office in Seattle in two years. I may hire an associate in 1998.

My type of practice lends itself nicely to a "virtual" office existence, permitting me to operate anywhere in the world. Much of my legal work is conducted with the assistance of CD-ROM's, Internet links with Lexis-Nexis, FAX and conference calls. I strive to keep court appearances, hearings and depositions which I must attend in person, particularly in geographically remote areas, to a minimum. I recommend the virtual office highly to the solo practitioner because of the high cost of office overhead.

Because of the specialized focus of my practice, the law school courses of greatest applicability were in administrative law, constitutional law and civil procedure. Everything else, e.g., immigration and customs law, I have had to pick up on my own. The American Immigration Lawyers Association has a good mentoring program, and offers a number of books, manuals and courses to develop expertise. These resources have been critical in my practice. Graduates of Northwestern might consider joining one of the Bar association sections for their CLE opportunities and to acquire mentors.

Sincerely,
W. Andrew Harrell
1994 NWCUC Graduate



NEW NEWS IS GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO USE LEXIS-NEXIS

Last year NWCU offered Lexis-Nexis services to students and faculty members. The school received mostly positive feedback from the students who made use of the online legal and news library. Some found that the services were not as 'user friendly' as they would like.

Recently, there have been some changes in the way Lexis-Nexis supports law school accounts. The changes make Lexis-Nexis more useable for our students and faculty.

We can now log into Lexis-Nexis directly through the Internet at www.lexis-nexis.com/research. This site is more 'user friendly' than using the dialer we had previously used and negates purchasing software for access. To use this site you will need a password in addition to the school's ID number. The password will always stay the same with the ID changing every three months.

If you do not have Internet access but do have a computer with modem you can order software that logs directly onto the www.Lexis-Nexis.com/research site. It will not allow you to browse the Internet but does allow access to the Lexis-Nexis research web site. This software is different from last year's L-N office '97. If you're interested in this software please indicate so on your 'Lexis-Nexis Student Agreement' form.

We now have copies of the Lexis-Nexis handbook called "Learning Lexis". Much of the information contained in this 75-page handbook is directed at learning and using Lexis-Nexis for law school students. The sections included in this handbook are "Learning Lexis, Research On The Web, How To Succeed In

Law School, Law Review Or Law Journal", and "How To Find A Legal Career". Please indicate on your 'Lexis-Nexis Student Agreement' form if you wish to order a copy of this handbook.

Lexis-Nexis is currently looking into how they can improve their services to law schools. Be sure to give us your feedback and we will pass it along to our account representative.

REMINDER:

For Lexis-Nexis research help call 1(800)45-LEXIS. For account information call NWCU or email Kelly@nwcucolaw.edu

The ID number for our account will change every three months. You will need to call the school for the new ID. Lexis-Nexis will not furnish this information. NWCU's Lexis-Nexis account is to be used for **non-commercial** purposes only.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Success, I am convinced, is not something that just happens to us because of fortunate happenstance or luck. Instead, it occurs almost entirely from strong desire, coupled with an openness to recognize opportunity and the daring to act on it.

Catherine B. Ahles, a writer, lecturer and educator from my original home state, Michigan, in a speech to her students in 1992 said:

"We make our own opportunity. If you look around, you will find that by and large this is true.

The story of Christopher Columbus is a wonderful example. Columbus, as you know, was a Genovese sailor and explorer with a burning desire to learn what existed just over the horizon, but no means to get himself there. Queen Isabella of Castile was a bright and wealthy ruler, with the same burning desire but with barriers which prevented her from leading her own expedition. Together, they **created** the opportunity to explore the new land, with Columbus bringing his daring and maritime experience together with Isabella's money and power. Together, they created an opportunity neither may have achieved on his or her own.

It is only through paying attention to ourselves that we can assess our own desires, priorities and goals and act on them.

Daring is the willingness to take a chance, to engage in the unknown, to risk failure while pursuing success, to undergo an adventure.

Daring is not mustering what it takes to jump from an airplane. It is mustering what it takes to go back to school at 40. It's following a spouse to California to pursue a job opportunity – while you have no job in sight. It's taking on a new and most challenging assignment.

We all have the opportunity to practice modern-day daring."

So, I give each of you students and potential students of law the challenge to do the most you can with the opportunity now before you. **Serious daring starts from within.** Together we can create a future of new opportunities and success.

Northwestern California University, like Queen Isabella, has the ship to get you there.

Are you the daring sailor with a burning desire to learn? If so, a new world of information and knowledge awaits your discovery.

Michael P. Clancey
President and Dean

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Fleming's Fundamentals of Law Baby Bar Review is an intensive four-day course offering the most advanced complete program of instruction and written materials available to students preparing to take the Baby Bar Examination. This workshop integrates substantive law with examination analysis. Fleming's teaches and clearly demonstrates the application of law to hypothetical facts, a skill that is essential to pass each section of the baby bar exam. All workshop participants receive:

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **California General Bar Exam**
February 23 – 25.
- **Every Thursday night classes are held in Sacramento. For information on topics offered please call (916) 567-5921.**
- **California First Year Law Students Exam Tuesday June 29th.**

*** Mock Baby Bar exams are held on campus and are for any student who wishes to attend. Twice a year the mock exams are given to prepare students for the California First Year Law Students Exam.**

STUDENT SURVEY

-Please fill out this survey and send it in to us so we can get a better idea of services that would be useful to you.

Do you have a home computer?

Do you have a computer at work?

Do you use Lexis-Nexis services?

Do you have a CDROM?

Are you able to get on the Internet?

Would you be interested in an online 'Chat' group for NWCU students and faculty?

Would you be interested in turning in assignments via the Internet?

Would you be interested in course materials online or on software?

Here's your opportunity to give us your feedback! Please include other comments or suggestions, and send your survey to

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